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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000893

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB
PLEASE PASS TO USTDA DAN STEIN
ENERGY FOR EKIMOFF/THOMPSON
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2018

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: IT'S ALL IN THE (BERDIMUHAMEDOV'S)
FAMILY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran for reasons 1.4(B)
and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Turkmenistan's President Berdimuhamedov has a large extended family, with four children and five sisters. Like many of his counterparts elsewhere in the region, he apparently is pursuing a policy of favoring family members and relatives. Over the last year, he has appointed relatives of his wife to the positions of Minister of Textiles, Central Bank Chairman, and Minister of Construction. Post is also hearing anecdotal stories that he has begun ensuring that family members are given opportunities to acquire wealth. END SUMMARY.

FAMILY IS IMPORTANT

¶2. (C) In Central Asia, relationships are important. It is nearly impossible to get anything done if you do not develop a relationship with your interlocutor or potential business partner. No relationship, however, is more important than family, and family members of Central Asian leaders have profited from the good fortune of having a relative in power. Like in other Central Asian countries, it appears that President Berdimuhamedov's family is also reaping some benefit.

IN-LAWS, COUSINS, SISTERS, BUT NO BROTHER

¶3. (C) A published biography of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov confirms that he was born on June 29, 1957 in the village of Babarap in Geokdepe district. His father, Myaliguly Berdimuhamedov, taught secondary school but is now retired. His mother, Ogulabat Berdimuhamedova, is a homemaker. Berdimuhamedov is married, but his wife maintains an extremely low profile, never accompanying her husband to public events. The rumor mill says that he may have been married previously, but that marriage ended in divorce. It is widely known that the president has three daughters and one son, and that he has five sisters (all married) and

multiple nieces and nephews. It is widely believed that ex-Minister of Internal Affairs Hojamyrat Annagurbanov is a brother-in-law. Central Bank Chairman Guvanchmyrat Goklenov and Minister of Textiles Jemal Goklenova are related by marriage to the president's wife. Mrs. Berdimuhamedov's sister is married to Goklenov, making the Central Bank Chairman the brother-in-law of the president. Minister of Textiles Goklenova is the aunt of the Central Bank Chairman.

14. (C) Post has heard rumors that a brother of Berdimuhamedov was a major new business facilitator and has largely taken on the role that former President Niyazov's son, Murad, previously occupied as the chief manager of off-budgetary funds. This is wrong, because Berdimuhamedov does not have a brother. However, it is possible that one of the president's brothers-in-law has been given these responsibilities. The EU-TACIS representative here, who is well-connected, claims to have heard something similar, but has been unable to confirm the details.

15. (C) According to the General Manager of the Swiss logistics company Kuehne & Nagel representative office in Ashgabat, Shefik Gorench (strictly protect throughout), President Berdimuhamedov's cousin, Muhammet Berdimuhamedov, worked as a lawyer for Kuehne & Nagel when Gorench arrived as the head of the office in 2002 (the company at that time had a different name). However, Muhammet was "useless," and the company fired him due to allegations that he was violating the company's confidentiality clauses by discussing proprietary information with others. Gorench said that

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around 18 months ago, Muhammet worked as a driver for the Chinese ambassador, driving the ambassador's children to school every day. While in that job, Muhammet contacted Kuehne & Nagel because he wanted to export PVC pipe from Turkmenbashi City. Gorench added that the president does not get along with Muhammet and did not see him often when Berdimuhamedov was Minister of Healthcare and Medical Industry. Kuehne & Nagel knows that if the cousins had been on good terms, the company would have been in big trouble when Berdimuhamedov became president. Gorench, a Turkish national, also said that rumors that Muhammet is importing steel from Russia for use in the Turkish-dominated construction industry abound in the Turkish community.

LET'S NOT FORGET THE WIFE

16. (C) According to German oil firm Wintershall country manager Kal Sandhu, undeveloped land next to the Ustay housing compound where many Embassy employees live now belongs to Berdimuhamedov's wife. Previously, the lands had been given to the Turkish landlord of the Ustay compound to develop as a housing track for Royal Dutch Shell. After Shell pulled out of Turkmenistan, the development plans remained on hold, leaving the lands vulnerable to expropriation as the Berzengi district is developed for high-end apartment buildings and other new construction. According to Kuehne and Nagel General Manager Gorench, Minister of Construction Shamuhammet Durdyllyev is the brother of President Berdimuhamedov's wife, which would mean that her maiden name is Durdyllyeva.

17. (C) COMMENT: As in the rest of the Central Asia, power is an avenue to building greater wealth. Because of the strength of the family in Turkmen culture -- and the belief that one can trust a family member more than a stranger -- it is not surprising that President Berdimuhamedov would choose to put his family members in positions where they can support him and prosper. END COMMENT.
CURRAN